

BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH.

May 11, 1848.—Rev. Dr. Fleming, President, in the Chair.

The following communications were read:—

1. "Remarks on Marine Vegetation in Estuaries," by the Rev. Dr. Fleming.

The author called attention to the condition of the roots of the Algæ, as organs of adhesion and not of nourishment, and, consequently, that when other circumstances are favourable, marine plants may be absent simply for want of a *soil*. He gave as instances, a bank on which *Ulva latissima* grew wherever there was a cockle, to which it adhered, in the absence of any other support. On another bank a single but remarkably large plant of *Fucus vesiculosus* was attached to a stranded root of a tree, no other point of support existing on the surrounding sandy moving surface. He next adverted to the disappearance in succession of the Algæ in passing from the sea through an estuary into a river, remarking that *Fucus serratus* and *F. vesiculosus* cease to grow before *F. canaliculatus*, while *F. vesiculosus* advances farthest into the brackish water, and may even be observed, in different states of development, in the grassy marshes covered only by the spring tides. He described the influence exerted by the brackish water in rendering the fronds of *Fucus nodosus* much narrower, diminishing the size and number of the bladders, and changing its colour into a paler hue. In the *Fucus vesiculosus*, the bladders by degrees disappear, and a cellular mass occurs along the middle; or the leaves become narrow and plain, and it assumes the appearance of *Fucus ceranoides*, while the colour passes into a dingy yellow.

Dr. Fleming concluded his remarks by recommending the careful study of all the changes which marine plants undergo when passing under the influence of fresh water, so as to determine the range of variation of particular species, and thereby assist the labours of the systematic botanist, and check the too frequently hasty discriminations of the palæontologist.

2. "Description of a new species of Fern from Tahiti," by Dr. Greville. This beautiful species, which has been named *Antrophyum Grevillii* (Balfour MSS.), was picked in the island of Tahiti by Dr. Sibbald in 1846. The full description will be published in these 'Annals'* and in the Society's Transactions.

3. "Supplement to the Synopsis of British Rubi, No. II.," by Chas. C. Babington, Esq. This paper will appear in these 'Annals' † and in the Society's Transactions.

4. "Notes of a Botanical Visit to Ben Wyvis, Ross-shire, in June 1847," by R. M. Stark, Esq.

After detailing the route from Aberdeen through Strathpeffer, the author mentioned a few of the plants met with on the mountain, which, from its great extent and situation, rendering it difficult of access, he considered would scarcely repay the trouble of the botanist. He found it destitute of the more interesting alpine plants, with the exception of *Arbutus alpina*, which covered the projecting

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rocks in considerable abundance. *Rubus Chamæmorus* was plentiful on the lower parts of the hill, while *Vaccinium Oxycoccus* occurred sparingly. Dr. Balfour corroborated Mr. Stark's account of the uninteresting character of Ben Wyvis as a botanical field.

Mr. Stark exhibited portions of the wood of *Tanghinia venenifera*, a poisonous tree, native of Madagascar; *Sterculia platanifolia*; *Bombax Ceiba*, the silk cotton-tree; and leaves of *Theophrasta Jussieui*. The specimens, which were of considerable dimensions, were grown in this country.

Specimens of fossil earth, containing Diatomaceæ, found in Aberdeenshire, were sent by Dr. Dickie, and exhibited under the microscope.

Mr. James M'Nab exhibited a flowering plant of *Meconopsis aculeata*, from the garden of the Caledonian Horticultural Society, seeds of which were received from the Himalaya mountains by the late Sheriff Speirs.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ORIGIN OF THE NAME VANESSA.

IN reply to our correspondent who inquires respecting the origin of the name *Vanessa*, first given, we believe, by Fabricius to a species, and afterwards to one of those genera into which he divided the genus *Papilio* of Linnæus, we have no doubt he must have been indebted for it to Swift's well-known poem *Cadenus and Vanessa*, the former appellation being an anagram of *Decanus*, whilst by the latter the poet designated the victim of her unhappy attachment to him, *Esther* (or *Hessy*) *Vanhomrigh*.

In the great demand for new names which Fabricius had to assign to the novelties which he was occupied in describing, after having availed himself of classical mythology and poetry, and scripture history, we find evidence, in the names *Gonerilla*, *Cordelia*, and perhaps *Morna*, that he sometimes had recourse also to the names occurring in the literature of our own country, where he was long engaged in examining the Banksian and other cabinets.

M. Sodoffsky has sported a very superfluous critical conjecture (*Bull. Soc. Impériale des Naturalistes de Moscou*, 1837) that the name should be written *Phanessa*, as if it were derived from the Greek *Φάνης*. But it can never be supposed, that if such had been the intention of Fabricius, he would have written *Vanessa*.—R. T.

LUCERNARIA FASCICULARIS, *Fleming*.

The Rev. Z. M. Hamilton, of Bressay, Zetland, has ascertained that this beautiful zoophyte feeds upon the young *Littorina littorea*. In a letter to Dr. Neill of the 3rd of March, he writes, "I discovered that it feeds on small wilks, which it, by means of its arms and feelers, puts into its stomach, so many even as four or five at a time, and when the meat is fully extracted the shells are rejected."

In a subsequent communication (20th of March) to Dr. Neill, Mr. Hamilton says,—“With regard to the food which this creature seems

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